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SHANGHAI AND HONGKONG.

SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH PORTS.

CABARETS AND GAMBLING.

(BY L. G. GRAHAM-TAYLOR.)

After living in Shanghai for the past ten years, the majestic beauty and hilly grandeur of Hongkong struck me much more forcibly yesterday than it did in 1913 when passing through for the first time.

The Colony's beautiful beaches with the attendant sea bathing apparently more than compensate for the trying period encountered in the hot season when the intense humidity makes life extremely uncomfortable for all—especially for those who toil and live on the lower levels. Then, of course, the Colony has splendid and safe motor roads which lead to ideal spots. There is no motoring in Shanghai worthy of the name. People merely own motor cars for the convenience of getting to and from office and to transport themselves short distances at night.

In the past, one at least could take a drive round the Rubicon in the Jessfield district but now with armed robbers and murderers operating daily, one hesitates to travel even on the outside roads after dusk. Indeed, the Shanghai Municipal Council has warned residents on many occasions to refrain from motoring or walking in this area.

Early to Bed.

Then, one is told, Hongkong goes to bed before midnight. In Shanghai, the town is always awake. Cabarets make a point of advertising that they are "open all night." And they do very good business too; in spite of legislation. The decision that all bars, cabarets, dance halls, and places of entertainment must close at 2 a.m. from February 1 in the International Settlement was arrived at by the Municipal Council in December last after receiving reports from various departments. The recommendation to curtail the hours was endorsed by officials of the Municipal police and the view was expressed that most of the brawls and similar troubles occurred between 2 a.m. and daylight. [illegible] the new bye-law came into effect but the result was that the cabaret business was transferred to the French Concession. In addition the Del Monte cabaret and [illegible] hall happens to be [illegible] on a Municipal road but in Chinese territory so the new bye-law does not apply in this case and the cabaret seldom closes before 6 a.m.

The question of a clash of closing time regulations in adjoining settlements recalls the position which obtained in Tientsin some years ago. In the British Concession, all cabarets (there were about half a dozen) had to close at 1 a.m.

The prinicipal cabaret was situated on the boundary of the British Concession and the ex-German Concession, which was under Chinese control. Within 30 yards of this cabaret and in the Chinese controlled area was another establishment owned by the same interests as the one on the border of the British Concession. There was no time limit in the Chinese controlled area—just a matter of a license. Accordingly, promptly at 1 a.m. the British Concession cabaret would close. The dancing partners, managers, orchestra, boys, etc., etc. would troop across the road to the establishment in the ex-German Concession and carry on until daylight. Patrons would follow, of course, and there was practically no interruption in the festivities. An almost identical situation obtains in Shanghai to-day except that it takes a few minutes more to transfer one's patronage to the "all-night" establishments.

Gambling Opportunities.

The new game of Hai-Alai has taken root in Shanghai and has become very popular with the Chinese. The game is played every night in the newly built Auditorium and a considerable amount of gambling takes place. There are also matinees on Sunday. As a matter of fact the game is very fascinating and apparently has come to stay. Greyhound racing may be seen four nights a week in spite of much protest on the part of the Chinese and the courses are packed on all occasions. During 1929 there were [illegible] like 65 pony race meetings and this year the programme calls for about the same number distributed, of course, over the three courses. In addition there is motor cycle dirt track racing which has met with some success but which has been handicapped by the heavy rains. There is also to be a "Velodrome" which will house cycle racing and one or two other sporting projects are in the course of formation. It will be seen, therefore, that Shanghai is doing its best to justify its oversea reputation of being the "Paris of the East."

Hongkong's Climate.

In discussing the attractions of Hongkong, the writer remembers that Hongkong people are very touchy on the subject. Some years ago, I think it was 1915, whilst travelling in the P. & O. s.s. Malwa, a fellow passenger, Engr. Commdr. James of "Taikoo" was very indignant one day when a friend suggested that Hongkong was "Hell upon Earth" during most months of the year. In answer to this slanderous and exaggerated statement, Commdr. James said that he had lived in the Colony for many years, I forget exactly how many he mentioned, and that both he and his family had found the climate excellent. In short he maintained that Hongkong was one of the best spots in the East. Whilst there can be no doubt that the spring months are delightful yet there also is no doubt that the summer months are exceptionally trying, although one hears less nowadays of mildewed shoes, musty clothing, etc., etc.

Shanghai's Offerings.

At the present time, the "Paris of the East" offers to the resident an opportunity to do business under the most disturbing conditions. And that is putting it mildly. The unprecedented position in exchange makes business practically an impossibility and many firms have had to reduce staff. Yet building continues. Never before has there been such a boom in land and property [illegible] Shanghai as at present. Land values have rapidly advanced [illegible] extraordinary levels and building is proceeding at increased speed in all sections of the International Settlement and French Concession. Almost daily one hears of further transactions in the real estate market and architects and contractors are overwhelmed with work.

What precisely has caused this building boom one is unable completely to ascertain but it is certain that the pouring into Shanghai of large quantities of money by powerful foreign interests has done much to restore the confidence lost by the turn of events and political uncertainties in Chinese quarters during the past few years. In addition, wealthy and influential Chinese have invested large sums in real estate engaging foreign companies to protect their interests and manage the properties.

The activity is not confined to one class of building. [illegible] residential flats and [illegible] ment buildings predominate [illegible] large hotels, shops, houses, theatres, factories and godowns are in the course of construction.

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Going back to the early history of property in Shanghai or to the time when Shanghai was first made an open port, land was obtainable at agricultural prices. Records are in existence of land purchased at $150 per mow. Contrast this with the price of $600,000 per mow which is about the value of land situated at the junction of Nanking Road and the Bund. Some amazing statistics are available in connexion with land values. Eight hundred million taels is the estimated market value of land under foreign registration in the International Settlement and in the case of land in some parts of the Western district it is estimated that the value is fifteen times greater than the value placed upon it 20 years ago. In 1855 there were merely 187 registered lots as against over 10,000 registered British lots to-day.

Returning again to the matter of general business in Shanghai, the disturbing influence of continued and useless civil war also makes business hazardous if not impossible in many areas which, in normal times, were large buyers and sellers of produce.

Prohibitive Rentals.

Shanghai also offers at the present time a house or flat at a prohibitive rental out of all proportion to its real worth and it will also sell you the necessities of life at a price. This price will be almost double that paid a year ago. In other words the cost of living has gone up practically 100 per cent. within the past twelve months. Some firms granted increase to their employees but the majority have not. Mainly because they cannot. Business would not justify such extra expenditure. Accordingly most people find it exceedingly difficult to make both ends meet. Home leave is practically out of the question for all and it is interesting to note that at the present rate of exchange a passage to London costs about $2,000. The writer leaves it to the reader to calculate what costs for a man, wife, and famil to travel nowadays.

The Visiter in Shanghai.

To the visitor, Shanghai offe excellent hotel accommodation rates which compare with most the East although it is within th knowledge of the writer that certain foreign nobleman—cha man of a League of Nation's Co mittee—who recently pas through Shanghai in connexio with a commission of inquir found the rates prohibitive at certain hotel and sought accomm dation elsewhere within a fe hours of his arrival.

Shanghai also offers a nig life second to none and compa able with anything encountered the world. One, if one so desire need never go to bed for th customary period. There i always somewhere to go. Although the following obviously is not the usual routine followed by the majority of visitors, nevertheless it was the programme followed—with certain minor alterations—for some days by an acquaintance of the writer recently:

- 11 a.m. Breakfast consisting of an egg nog (very cold). and another egg nog.
- 11.30 a.m. to 12.15 p.m. Bath and some reflection on last night's doings.
- 12.30 p.m. Club
- 1.30 p.m. to 2.30. Lunch
- 2.30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Visiting local agents.
- 4.15 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Bridge at the Club.
- 8.30 p.m. and onwards. Dinner out; several cabarets, eventually arriving at hotel between 6 a.m. and 7.30 a.m. tired but not too unhappy.

It may come as a surprise to many but it is a fact that statistics show that the bulk of the money spent in Shanghai's cabarets comes out of the purse of visitors.

From 8 p.m. onwards one may always vary the routine by calling in at the Greyhound tracks or the Hai-Alai Auditorium. A gamble on any scale is always available at either of these.

Shanghai's Noises.

In addition to all these experiences, the visitor will be able to share with the resident the appalling and nerve-racking noises in the streets of Shanghai, the existence of which has just been brought to the notice of the city fathers after almost a year of continuous correspondence in the press.

Really and truly the noise in Shanghai to-day is something frightful. I think there are something slightly under 9,000 motor vehicles licensed and as all of these have to operate on roads within an area of something like seven miles square, some idea of the din can, perhaps, be imagined.

Chinese owned cars are the worst offenders with hire cars coming a close second. Then we have the 'buses and the trams. The former are not too bad but the drivers of the latter—particularly in the French Concession—play a tattoo on the gong for stretches of several hundred yards in the main thoroughfares. And, it must be borne in mind, with the night life of Shanghai ever on the increase, motor cars are never off the streets. Greyhound racing and Hai-Alai never finish before 12.30 a.m. and often as late as 1.30 a.m. At this hour, therefore, some 10,000 people have to be transported to their homes or elsewhere.

So it must be conceded by all that your Colony is by far the best off. You have the sea, early hours, the British Government, and a rattling good cricket team. What could be nicer?

D.C. (Cr. ~~and~~ Special Branch)
Information

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